

Converse House  
185 Washington Street.  
Norwich  
New London County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-260

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CONN-260

## CONVERSE HOUSE

Address: 185 Washington Street, Norwich, New London County,  
Connecticut

Present Owner Kermit F. Belcher  
and Occupant:

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement Built about 1870, this medium sized house is  
of Significance: characteristic of the period, with typical  
interior and exterior wood details.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The original owner was probably Col. Converse, who, with his wife, lived in the house for many years. Col. Converse gave the Converse Memorial Building to the local library. The house was owned by B. Haley before the present owner acquired it about 1959.
2. Date of erection: C. 1870
3. Sources of information: Interview with Raymond B. Case, 12 Mediterranean Lane, Norwich, Connecticut, October 26, 1960 by Osmund R. Overby.  
Interview with Kermit F. Belcher, 185 Washington Street, Norwich, Connecticut, October 27, 1960, by Osmund R. Overby.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

## A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This medium sized frame house, built c. 1870, has many characteristic features of the period.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

## B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The house has an irregular shape approximately 35' x 60', two stories high plus attic and cellar, with a three-story tower over the entrance.

2. Foundations: Random ashlar
3. Wall construction: Frame construction with flush, horizontal board sheathing painted light brown with dark brown wood trim.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: There is a large rounded front porch with seven faces, wood columns with flat pointed wood arches between, and a pointed, segmented roof. There is a small north side porch over which the second story projects, and a small covered stoop at the back door.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys with caps, four flues in one, two in the other.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance has a six panel door of varnished hardwood set in a heavily relieved doorway with Gothic profile moldings.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Most of the windows in the house are double hung, six over six light or four over four light. There are various other types of windows, including round ones and casements with diamond shaped lights recently added in the kitchen. There are no shutters.
7. Roof
  - a. Shape, covering: Steeply pitched gable roofs over main body of the house and steeply pitched hip roof over the tower. All roofs covered with slate in pattern in grays and red.
  - b. Eaves: The open eaves have elaborate wood arches, supported on brackets from the walls, exposed in various gable ends.
  - c. Dormers, cupolas: The eaves line is rather low, and most of the second floor windows have small, gabled dormers.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor plans: The house, rectangular in plan running east-west, has an entrance hallway at the west end. A parlor, living room, study and utility room occupy the north half of the house in that order toward the rear: a dining room, pantry, and kitchen the south half. The second floor is divided by a hallway running the length of the house with five bedrooms opening off it. There is one third floor room in the tower.

2. Stairways: There is an open U-shaped stairway in the entrance hall with open string stairs, and with a molded handrail, square paneled newel posts, and turned balusters, three per step. There is also a small back stairway.
  3. Flooring: Oak
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered, most walls are papered. The dining room has solid walnut paneling and trim with a large mantelpiece, simulated beamed ceiling, and built-in window seat and cupboards. The tower room on the third floor is paneled to about 4'-0" high and plastered above.
  5. Doors: Mostly four-panel doors on the interior.
  6. Trim: Molded wood window trim, pilastered trim on wide passages supported by posts between parlor, living room, and study.
  7. Hardware: Original brass hardware throughout.
  8. Lighting: Electric.
  9. Heating: Central heating. Fireplaces in the living room, dining room and one second floor bedroom.
- D. Site
1. General setting and orientation: The house faces west on a large, flat city lot.
  2. Enclosures: There is a low stone wall across the front of the lot with a cut stone coping. The wall is laid in a random pattern of large, flat stones with diagonal joints and with occasional star patterns worked into the coursing.
  3. Outbuildings: There is a large barn and carriage shed at the southeast corner of the lot. See separate photo-data book: Converse Barn HABS No. CONN-263.
  4. Walks, driveways, etc.: There is an asphalt paved driveway leading past the entrance porch to the barn.

5. Landscaping: Informal landscaping with lawn, trees, shrubs, and flowers.

13.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
Philadelphia 6, Pa.  
October 1960.